



May

## NEWSLETTER

2017

### LOCAL ACTION LIST

Most residents will have construed from our update reports in newsletters that our "Action List" which at one time had been so successful in achieving improvements for our local area had more recently represented a catalogue of "non- success" with repeated agreements and deadlines being missed for work to be undertaken. The cumulative effect of successive annual cuts to funding, a major Council restructuring and downsizing of staff numbers, driven by the need for cost savings, and reflected in a loss of knowledge and experience within the Council organisation are all factors which contribute to the general problem. Council changes are still on going and appointments are being made within the new organisational structure but the shortage of trained technical staff to fill the new posts remains a significant difficulty. Things are unlikely ever to be the same again as far as community engagement and expectations are concerned, with the new locality Management making it very clear that future project work will be given close scrutiny and only those projects which have a high priority are likely to be supported. This financial prudence may be welcomed by some but is a problem with such a backlog of work on roads and footpaths in particular. Within this difficult background there have been some recent chinks of light and green shoots. The new Locality Team give every indication of being willing to engage with us and some work has recently been done on projects which had accumulated cobwebs on our list. These have included the white lining and road markings at the Quality Street /Queensferry Road junction, drop kerbing on Cramond Road South from the pedestrian crossing at Barnton Avenue to the RBS, although the crossing at Smarts has yet to be done, and double yellow lines at Vivian Terrace and Corbiehill Crescent. A meeting took place very recently to discuss details of replacement of missing bollards at the Lauriston Farm Road /Cramond Road Junction, which has been a long standing bone of contention, and we now have a definite promise that the work will be done before the end of September. Again, recently, the Council responded to our complaints about Vivian Terrace, just about the street in worst condition in our area and having been missed from the 2017/18 capital programme for road repairs, by undertaking a significant patching programme on the worst section. On the wider picture, as everywhere, the condition of local roads and footpaths continues to generate a consistent and justifiable level of complaints. We have been provided with the list of planned projects for 2017/18 but we are still waiting for an update on what is now planned for the following years. We cannot really dispute the Council's list of projects but we have our own one for local streets in worst condition and there are very few of these on the Council's list for this year. The problem is there are so many roads and footpaths which need repair that the programme has ceased to be manageable within current resources. Two significant projects to be carried out locally this year are a major upgrading of the cycle path between East Barnton Avenue, through Davidson's Mains Park to the Queensferry Road, funded from the Council's budget for upgrading cycle links across the city, and the re-surfacing of about 300m of footpath in Easter Park, a project carried over from last year. For those who wish more details, we will be publishing a revised Action List on the notice board and website together with the updated list of planned projects for our area.

### UPDATE ON LOCAL PARKING PROBLEMS

The Association is continuing to get complaints about inconsiderate parking and the difficulties for local residents. The Council have given us a commitment to undertake surveys of the problems at the junction of Corbiehill Avenue with Corbiehill Road and at the junction of Corbiehill Road with Main Street with a view to considering double yellow lines at these locations. We understand these are on going and recognise that it takes time. We are also continuing to get complaints about the situation at The Green which operates as an essential parking facility for the services on Main Street but it is very difficult at times for residents to find parking spaces. It has been suggested to us that some residents did not understand the exact detail of our survey last year to see if there was support for some restricted parking space for residents so if things continue to get worse we may approach the issue again. Recently we have had complaints about inconsiderate parking on Corbiehill Crescent. The double yellow lines at the junction with Corbiehill Road and "on the bend" have resolved the worst of the previous problems but the parking of cars on each side of the road outside the Turtle Dove cafe and further along the Crescent at the junction with the Place is causing blockages at times and worries for residents about access for delivery vehicles and more seriously for the emergency services. For the present we have reported these problems to the police and the wardens who are monitoring the situation.

## THE COUNCIL'S GRASS MAINTENANCE POLICY

In our November Newsletter we reported on complaints from residents about the reduction in the scope and frequency of the ground maintenance at Davidson's Mains Park. A new policy had been promoted and introduced under "living landscapes " to create a more natural look to public open spaces and to encourage biodiversity, although a major factor had been the need to reduce costs . The resulting appearance, much less manicured, is a question of individual taste, and there are locations where it is appropriate, but is more contentious in areas of play and recreation and where appearances are important. At the local park, as a result of the new policy, only a small area of the grass around the play park was being closely cut and the reduction in the frequency of general maintenance had resulted in the proliferation of weeds at the park entrance and adjacent to East Barnton Avenue, creating a very scruffy appearance. We had complaints about the appearance but the strongest opposition to the new regime came from parents of young children about dog mess and litter hidden in the longer grass in areas where they had previously been able to play without any risk. Our publicity about the park then resulted in more residents contacting the Association about very similar problems at Silverknowes Foreshore where the new maintenance regime had resulted in a reduction in the extent of closely cut grass around the Boardwalk Beach Club Cafe. It is a location which is popular with families and groups of all ages for recreation and exercise and on inspection we were appalled at the unkempt appearance of the location with profuse numbers of dockens, dandelions and other weeds growing in the longer grass. All this lead to two recent on site meetings with a Council Manager to discuss the problems and to see what could be done . The first meeting was at the park, where the Friends of the Park were also represented, and they were very supportive of the need to take account of public opinion while quite naturally wishing to retain the principles behind the need to support biodiversity. The outcome was an agreement by all parties to retain the overall revised maintenance regime but to increase the frequency of ground maintenance around the park entrance and adjacent to East Barnton Avenue. Most importantly it was agreed to significantly extend the area of grass being closely cut around the play area to give a reasonable expanse for play and recreation. The second site meeting at Silverknowes Foreshore resulted in a similar agreement being reached, to closely cut the grass to both the east and west side of the cafe to cover the total area which is popular for exercise and recreation. We will now be keeping an eye on what happens as the changes are introduced. We think it is a reasonable compromise but would like to hear from residents what they think about ground maintenance and grass cutting at the park, the foreshore or any other location over the summer season.

## DOES DAVIDSON'S MAINS WANT A CHRISTMAS LIGHTS EVENT IN 2017?

Some residents may be horrified by the suggestion that there may not be an event in 2017 while others may not really care but as things stand at present it is a highly pertinent question. Last year a sad catalogue of problems ultimately lead to the cancellation of festive lights on Main Street for the first time in almost 20 years, originating from the time when fund raising and events organised by the Association had raised the money to pay for the lampposts to be adapted to enable decorative lights to be attached, and later for the purchase of the "blue lights " which became a feature of the village and were the focal point for our annual switch on events. Over the years the "switch-on" in the grounds of the Episcopalian Church had developed into a popular community event, supported by the Church, the RHS choir, the Davidson's Mains Primary School choir, the local Pipe Band, and others, with mulled wine and mince pies being provided by Tesco. The only interruptions had been due to a couple of years of foul weather when the choir would have been at risk of hypothermia or the car park was under deep snow! Last year the "blue lights" had started to disintegrate and so with no focus for the "switch on" it had to be cancelled. Then without any discussion or advance notice the Council cancelled the decorative lights at eighteen out of town locations across the city, including Main Street. It is now clear that the continued reductions in Council funding means that there will not be any festive lights on Main Street for the 2017 festive season and it is highly doubtful if we will ever see such lights again. The Association is awaiting to hear exactly what will be supported by the Council instead of these lights and the final decision has probably been deferred until after the Council Election this month, although what we have been told is that the Council would probably support festive lights "on a tree on Council property". There-in lies an obvious problem because there is no suitable tree on the only Council property in the centre of the village at The Green, and in any case we would be concerned about the suitability of a site close to the war memorial. The obvious tree for decorations is the oak tree on the RBS property at the corner of Main Street but with it being on private ground and with the site up for sale that location may be problematic. Another option would be to try to get support and agreement from the Council for a Christmas tree at an appropriate location in the village and we would like to hear from residents where they think would be the best site. This all leads on the big question about whether with the ending of the festive lights on Main Street and the demise of the "blue lights" in the church grounds, there is still community support for the annual switch-on event, which would in future, by necessity, be remote from a decorated tree or a Christmas tree? We had signalled in our previous Newsletter that we hoped an Events Committee could be set up to plan and organise an event but it can only happen if there is a demand for it from those who want the annual event to continue. Over the next two or three weeks the Association will be contacting all those organisations who supported the switch-on event in the past to see what they think and to establish whether they want to be involved in a steering group to plan and organise something for 2017. If there is sufficient interest, the Association would facilitate the setting up of a committee and would give it advice and support but we really need others to be involved to take over to share the responsibility for the event. We would like to hear what local residents think. It may be there are some who want to get involved so please contact the Association if you are interested.

## **RECYCLING AT TESCO**

In our November Newsletter we catalogued a whole series of complaints about the miss-management of the waste paper recycling facility at Tesco, including the fact that the container was frequently full, the Council took weeks to empty it, even after complaints to Clarence, and the mess on the site caused by residents leaving bundles of paper lying around beside the container, because it was full. These problems had been much worse since the reduction in the number of paper bins on the site from two down to only one. We complained to the Council in November and we were informed that the contractor was not complying with the contract for the frequency of paper collection and that they had been asked to account for the failure to provide the contracted level of service. We heard no more from the Council, nor did the service improve, until recently when Charlotte received a reply which confirmed that the Council had agreed in principle to have a second waste paper bin located on the site and that henceforth the collection of waste paper would be undertaken on a fortnightly basis. This is a success story and it is just a pity we had to wait so long for a solution to the problem. We will be keeping an eye on the site to make sure the council are complying with the new commitments.

## **OUR LITTER AND RUBBISH PROBLEM**

In 2012 the Association lead a strong campaign on behalf of local residents about the amount of litter and rubbish which was lying about in our area, particularly on Main Street but also at many other locations. We involved local businesses, both of the local schools and the Council Wardens in the initiative which had a number of positive outcomes, with visits to the schools by the Wardens, educational initiatives by the schools about the impact of litter on the environment, litter picks by the schools, visits by the Wardens at lunch times and more litter bins in the village. A big result was that Tesco agreed to clear up the rubbish on the former railway path, which they own, something which previous supermarket owners of the site had always refused to do. The unfortunate reality is that with the high number of fast food outlets in the village the litter problem is never really going to disappear until there is a complete change in attitudes in our "throwaway " society. The Association frequently makes complaints about problems in the area and we do get responses from the Council but complaints to us are on the increase and perhaps it is time for another initiative.

## **FRIENDS OF DAVIDSONS MAINS PARK.**

The Friends now have a website which can be found at [e-voice.org.uk/dmainspark](http://e-voice.org.uk/dmainspark). This is in a basic form just now, but more items will be added shortly. The council proposals for changes to the shared cycle path between Clermiston Road and East Barton Avenue were posted for public consultation recently. Members of the FoDMP committee met with council representatives and the DMSA to discuss the draft proposals and made some recommendations that have been incorporated into the final submission to planning. The outcome of the application will be announced later in the year. Scottish Gas Network (SGN) have been monitoring a suspected leak in the gas main the runs N-S at the east end of the park which the Friends of the Park are pursuing to ensure the problem is resolved. Committee member Mike McNiven has initiated an Art Competition that invites both school pupils and adults to submit any kind of art response to the park. Submissions are due in by 23<sup>rd</sup> May, and will be exhibited for judging at the Royal High School on 2nd June. Publicity has been posted around Davidsons Mains but any questions can be directed to me by email or phone. Contact details at the end of this report. The wetland area at the east end of the park was the subject of drainage work two summers ago, but the measures have been unsatisfactory, and the council is due to return to the site and make further proposals for improvements. The Friends are to meet with the council officials concerned very shortly. Currently, due to the exceptionally dry spell, an alarming amount of algae has accumulated, so this and several impromptu 'bridges' of fallen timbers are adding to the problem, and should be cleared as soon as possible. A work party will be organised. The Park Ranger, Iwan Thomas, has been in contact with a biodiversity consultant who has made very positive suggestions for enhancement to the woodland areas, and he will be setting up a work programme to implement some of these. Volunteer group will also be involved in this. The Living Landscape initiative by the council continues to monitor the grass cutting strategies in the park, and will also be extending the wildflower planting at the NW corner of the park. Finally, the football pavilion is currently free of graffiti thanks to the efforts of the club committee, so we are very grateful for that. Long may it continue.

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## **CONTACTING THE POLICE**

Are you worried about reporting an incident to the police because of the possibility that a follow up home visit may risk you being identified as the caller? The police tell us that if you call Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111 instead of calling 101 there is no follow up home visit.

## **PROBLEMS WITH HEAVY GOOD VEHICLES AND ARTICULATED LORRIES**

A problem which is definitely on the increase is the number of large commercial vehicles whose drivers are failing to observe the statutory operating restrictions in our area. Lauriston Farm Road has a maximum length restriction of 10 m. for commercial vehicles because of the very tight turning limits at the junction with Cramond Road South and yet this is ignored on an almost routine basis. Recently in a relatively short period of about half an hour, two members of the committee and a Council official observed no fewer than three long articulated vehicles making the turn in different directions. These vehicles cause obstructions while waiting for other queuing traffic to clear before they can make the turning manoeuvre while the over swing of the trailers as they turn is a risk to pedestrians and boundary walls. On Main Street there is a long standing 7.5 ton weight restriction on vehicles. It was applied initially because of weight restrictions on the bridge over the former railway line and when the bridge was subsequently reinforced the limit was retained to continue to protect Main Street from inappropriate intrusion by heavy commercial vehicles in a local village and shopping location. Recently we have observed a number of instances of obvious transgression of the weight limits, and this is concerning at a time when there are worries from some residents about the safety of school children using the crossings, particularly the one at the east end at Silverknowes Road. The specified and signposted route for all large or heavy vehicles travelling from the Queensferry Road to Granton, in either direction, is to use Telford Road and the West Granton Access Road from Crewe Toll Roundabout to West Granton Road. All the commercial operators are fully aware of this stipulation which is based on the advice of the Police and the Council Roads Authority. Recently the Association has been active in making complaints to the operators where we have details of infringements, including photographic evidence in some cases. The operators have generally been positive in their responses, with agreement to draw their driver's attention to the local restrictions and to enforce compliance with the advisory route via Telford Road. They are fully aware that their commercial licence is at risk if they fail to observe local traffic regulations. The police have been supportive by agreeing to monitor the problem and we have assurances that they will follow up on persistent offenders. The message is that we would encourage all local residents to note the details of vehicles whose drivers are flouting the restrictions. If you note the date and time, the vehicle registration and the name of the company with the displayed address or phone number we would be very pleased to follow it up.

## **WITHDRAWAL OF 32 AND 42 BUS SERVICES**

Residents will undoubtedly be aware that Davidson's Mains has suffered a reduction in the availability of local bus services following the decision by Lothian Buses to withdraw the number 32 and to terminate the number 42 at Craighleith Retail Park. The 32 was unique in providing a direct route around the north west of the city to Sighthill while the 42 provided a direct link to the popular local shopping centre at Stockbridge. The Association has received complaints from residents who valued each of these services and who will now have longer journeys with changes of service on route to reach their destinations. There are two aspects of these changes that are concerning. The first is that there was absolutely no prior discussion about the changes before the public announcement by Lothian Buses. It is remarkable that the decisions were a complete surprise to each of our local Councillors. Our second concern is more complex. Lothian Buses in their press communications to explain the case for the changes have linked them to the introduction of the new 200 service which travels a route from Ocean Terminal via Granton and Drylaw to the Queensferry Road which it then traverses as far as Clermiston Road before cutting off to towards the Glasgow Road and on to the Airport. The claim by Lothian buses is that the new service provides a partial replacement for both the withdrawn 32 and the curtailed 42. All we would say is that as far as Davidson's Mains is concerned the 200 does not provide any kind of substitute for the loss of either of our local services. In a wider context it is acknowledged that the former 32 route has been replaced in part on the north of the city by the new service but it is close to absurd to claim that the new service is in any way a substitute for the section of the withdrawn route 42 between Craighleith and Davidson's Mains. The only overlap in the two routes is on Groathill Road South but with each service having completely different destinations it is stretching credibility to suggest that the short overlap would represent a partial replacement of the old service by the new one. These bus changes are with us for the present but the committee has made a formal complaint to Lothian buses about the process for their introduction and the impact on local residents. We are also waiting for the details of the date for a meeting with our MSP to discuss the problems. It will be a joint meeting with Cramond and Barnton CC, with whom we share mutual concerns about the choice of route for the 200.

## **LAURISTON CASTLE "AN ENCHANTING CASTLE BY THE SEA!"**

The Castle is a wonderful place to attend events, set in beautiful tranquil gardens and our staff will always give you a warm welcome. Our busy programme includes: Entertaining, informative historical lectures, an exciting Family programme, including The Teddy Bears' Picnic, Spooky Lauriston and the family Enchanted Edwardian Christmas. Shakespeare on the Lawn in July, Murder Mysteries as well as award-winning Edinburgh Living History Events. Book these events and search others online at [usherhall.co.uk](http://usherhall.co.uk) (enter Lauriston Castle in the search box) or call 0131 228 1155. Pick up our brochure at any Museums and Galleries Edinburgh venue. Our events run all year around and are well worth a try. With the help of our dedicated local volunteers we aim to deliver weekend castle tours at 2pm and 3pm. (£5 adult, £3 concession). Lauriston Castle is situated at 2a Cramond Road South, Davidson's Mains, Edinburgh, EH4 5QD. Tel 0131 336 2060. We want to hear from you! Like us on Facebook ([facebook.com/Lauristoncastle](https://facebook.com/Lauristoncastle)) for updates, castle news and visitor information or tweet us (@edinculture)